Effect of Moral Outrage Norms on Collective Actions on Social Media

1) Review Introduction: Terms, Topics and Aims
2) Review Methodology: Keywords, Platforms and References

Keywords: Moral Outrage, Moral Communication, Collective Action, Collective Identity, Collective Guilt, Reparative Action, Retributive Action, Social Media, Online Activism

3) Background Overview: Brief History and Context of Applied Topics
4) Relevancy and Motivation: Psychological Theories and Models
5) Review Summary: Compilation and Intersection

I.   Terms

1. Moral Outrage:
Outrage is characterized by anger directed at the perceived third-party perpetrator and is felt on behalf of those unjustly harmed (Haidt, 2003; Hoffman, 2000; Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002; Montada & Schneider, 1989; Vidmar, 2000).

Moral outrage is an action orientated emotion, directed at a third party or system of inequality (Leach et al., 2002; Montada & Schneider, 1989)

Moral outrage is a response to infringements or transgressions on what people perceive to be the immunities they, or others with whom they identify, can expect based on their rights and privileges and what they understand to be their reasonable expectations regarding the behavior of others (Goodenough, 1997).

Moral outrage is an other-focused emotional response that can be evoked by the perception that a third party outgroup has perpetrated illegitimate harm against another outgroup (Thomas et al., 2009).

Moral outrage is an intense negative emotion combining anger and disgust triggered by a perception that someone violated a moral norm (Salerno et al., 2013).

2. Collective Guilt:
Collective guilt is a self-focused emotional response that can be evoked by the perception that one's ingroup has perpetrated illegitimate harm against another group (Rothschild et al., 2013).

3. Collective Identity and Collective Actions:
Collective Identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several interacting individuals who are concerned with the orientation of their action as well as the field of opportunities and constraints in which their action takes place (Melucci, 1996).

Scholarly interest in collective identity as an agent of collective action grew as an alternative to dominant instrumental approaches such as resource mobilization theory that did not

meaningfully address expressive, performative, and cultural components of social movements (Melucci, 1996; Workneh, 2021).

II.   Topics

1. Moral Outrage and Retributive Action vs Collective Guilt and Reparative Action:
As an emotional experience that marks a perceived threat to the moral status quo, outrage motivates efforts to intervene in the name of restoring justice. Moral outrage is often associated with a desire to take retributive action against a third-party perpetrator to restore justice on behalf of disadvantaged groups (Haidt, 2003; Vidmar, 2000).

Moral outrage as an emotional response reflects an underlying concern with justice for the disadvantaged (Rothschild, 2013). Advantaged group members' outrage at a third party for illegitimately harming a disadvantaged group may ultimately be driven, not by concerns with justice, but by the same concern with moral identity maintenance that underlies feelings of collective guilt.

Rothschild et al. manipulated the purported cause of working-class Americans' suffering (ingroup cause vs. unknown cause vs. outgroup cause) and whether a potential scapegoat target (i.e., illegal immigrants) was portrayed as a viable or nonviable alternative source of this harm. Participants primed with ingroup culpability for working-class harm (versus other sources) reported increased moral outrage and support for retributive action toward immigrants when immigrants were portrayed as a viable source of that harm but reported increased collective guilt and support for reparative action when immigrants were portrayed as a nonviable source of that harm.

2. Collective Action in Response to Collective (Perceived) Disadvantage
Collective action in response to collective disadvantage is a complicated phenomenon for which numerous explanations have been offered (Klandermans, 1997). For example, RDT (e.g., Walker & Smith, 2002) and SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) focus on the degree to which group members perceive their disadvantage as group based and unfair.

3. Group Based Emotions as Explanations of Collective Action
Although concerned with the above aspects of perceived disadvantage, IET (E. R. Smith, 1993) and some relative deprivation theorists (Folger, 1987) focus more on the experience of group-based emotions like anger as explanations of collective action.

4. Emotional and Emotion-Focused Coping vs Instrumental Social Support and Problem-Focused Coping
Results of structural equation modeling showed that procedural fairness and emotional social support affected the group-based anger pathway (reflecting emotion-focused coping), whereas instrumental social support affected the group efficacy pathway (reflecting problem-focused coping), constituting 2 distinct pathways to collective action tendencies (Van Zomeren, 2004).

5. Group Based Interaction Primed with Injunctive Norms Evokes Moral Outrage Commitment to Action

Norms about outrage and efficacy were harnessed to an opinion-based group identity (Bliuc, McGarty, Reynolds, & Muntele, 2007) and explored in the context of a novel group-based interaction method. Results showed that the group-based interaction boosted commitment to action especially when primed with an (injunctive) outrage norm. This norm stimulated a range of related effects including increased identification with the prointernational development opinion-based group, and higherefficacy beliefs.Results provide an intriguing instantiation of the power of group interaction (particularly where strengthened with emotion norms) to bolster commitment to positive social change (Thomas, 2009).

6. Social Media Amplifies Moral Outrage

Recent theorizing suggests that the design of social media platforms amplifies moral outrage by lowering the social costs associated with outrage and increasing its personal benefits, especially when moral content interacts with moral sensitivities to shape exposure to social media and subsequent behavior (Crockett, 2017). Thus, moral outrage sparked by messages on social media and the internet more broadly is likely a crucial factor in explaining recent alarming trends in societal discourse and their consequences for increasing polarization and the decay of democratic norms (Carpenter et al., 2021).

7. Moral Outrage and Political Polarization on Social Media

In this study, researchers identified three specific types of socially negative behaviors that moral outrage facilitates: aggression (behavior intended to harm others), sophistry (poor argumentation), and withdrawal (avoiding discussions of politics). They described psychological mechanisms through which moral outrage can lead to these outcomes, specifically focusing on dehumanization and group antagonism (Carpenter et al., 2021).

III. Case Studies

1. Indonesian Cattle Export Controversy

This study focuses on a media controversy in 2011 regarding the slaughter of beef cattle in Indonesian abattoirs and the subsequent banning of live cattle exports to Indonesia by Australia (Small et al., 2019).

It was found that social media interacted with traditional media to elevate issues that triggered moral outrage to elevate issues that triggered moral outrage and attempted to influence the government into implementing specific policy actions. They found that social media mainly played the role of narrowing the range of views individuals were exposed towards. Rather than operating in isolation, social media also operated alongside traditional broadcasting media to amplify the effects on moral outrage. The current study demonstrated the capacity of the traditional media to infame public outrage and how its associated interaction with social media has introduced a wider range of actors, some marginal and even covert, into the shaping of the political agenda.

- This supports arguments for moral outrage as a product of social media interactions to fuel potential political polarization due to increased perceived influence on politics

- However, it also showed that social media's role only had an amplifying effect on social norms and public opinion, suggesting that it may also support collective action, both retributive and reparative.

2. Political Reform in Ethiopia

This study investigates the role of social media platforms in mobilizing Ethiopians toward political reform during the protest and post-protest periods demarcated by the ascent of Abiy Ahmed as the new Prime Minister of Ethiopia (Workneh et al., 2021).

Regarding social media's role during protests, results showed educated Ethiopian mostly refrained from active participation. For this demographic, social media platforms were used mostly as gateways to obtain news and information related to the protests rather than platforms to organize for offline civic activities. The stake of academicians and social thinkers in the transaction of ideas and debates seem minimal due to the negative perception of Social Network Platforms such as Facebook as 'chaotic' and 'irrational (Workneh et al., 2021).

Although survey results overwhelmingly portrayed a pessimistic view of Ethiopian social media's political discourse culture, data generated from interviews dispute this line of argument by highlighting the opportunities SNSs afforded to formerly marginalized groups to organize and celebrate their cultural heritage and collectively chart their future political and economic aspirations (Workneh et al., 2021).

In the Ethiopian context, Facebook's outsized role in protest communication is dwarfed by its inability to foster a national framework of shared citizenship (Workneh et al., 2021).

Workneh concludes that "outrage communication, in the context of competing collective identities, denotes antagonistic communicative performances that outsource wrongdoing to the 'other' in a manner that absolves intra-group members from misconduct and ascribes culpability on adversaries or outgroups."

- This study closely revolves around the phenomenon discussed in Crockett's paper on Moral Outrage on social media, pointing out many parallels between the literature and this case study.
- However, while this study portrays moral outrage as socially negative, it also uncovers out many underlying details about the how social media fosters moral outrage and what effects it induces: Social networks draw more people into the discussion, while disproportionately affecting different demographics, resulting in "an inability to foster a national framework of shared citizenship.". This has many future implications for policy shaping regarding social media regulations.

3. Anger Consensus Messaging and Climate Mitigation

This study aims to investigate whether social norm messaging about collective anger can impact perceptions of consensus and public support for climate mitigation.

In a pilot study and two survey experiments over 1529 samples, researchers found that relative to control messages, normative appeals that convey growing public anger about U.S. inaction on

climate change (i.e., dynamic anger consensus messaging) can enhance Americans' consensus estimates of other Americans' climate-related beliefs and support for mitigation policy, and expectations for future climate mitigating collective action (Sabherwal et al., 2021).

Moreover, exposure to a dynamic anger consensus message led to similar estimates of Americans' policy support and belief in climate change as messages that explicitly conveyed public support for climate mitigation (Study 1) or consensus belief in anthropogenic climate change (Study 2). When tailored for a cross-partisan audience, anger consensus messaging was also effective in bolstering personal support for climate mitigation (Study 2). Notably, similar effects were observed across partisan groups. These findings suggest that, by signaling shared motivational states, emotion consensus appeals can enhance expectations for social change, with the potential to mobilize bipartisan support for climate mitigation (Sabherwal et al., 2021).

- Although anger consensus messaging can be used both online and offline (as well as the fact that the two studies featured did not follow a social network model), the paper highlights that anger messaging in the modern age has predominantly shifted online. This hints at the effects of moral outrage on collective action on social media.
- Although specifically limited to the topic of climate change, the results in this paper inherently challenges the conclusions within Carpenter's *Political Polarization and Moral Outrage on Social Media*, shedding light into how social messaging and public outrage can lead to bipartisan success.

IV.   Extended Reference List

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